

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE BILL ANALYSIS

AMENDMENT DATE: 04/16/2012
POSITION: Neutral

BILL NUMBER: AB 1541
AUTHOR: Dickinson, Roger
RELATED BILLS: SB 1000 (Yee)

BILL SUMMARY: Public Utilities Commission: Public Records.

Existing law prohibits the California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) or an officer or employee of the PUC from disclosing any information furnished to the PUC by a public utility, a subsidiary, an affiliate, or corporation holding a controlling interest in a public utility, unless the information is specifically required to be open to the public inspection under the Public Utilities Act, except on order of the PUC or a commissioner in the course of a hearing or proceeding.

This bill would subject the PUC to the state's Public Records Act, make information submitted by utilities to the PUC available for public review and bring the PUC into line with the policy and practice of other public agencies in California.

FISCAL SUMMARY

PUC staff state this bill would not result in a fiscal impact. The Department of Finance concurs and notes any cost should be absorbable within existing resources allotted to the PUC.

COMMENTS

Finance is neutral on the bill and notes the bill is intended to bring bring transparency and accountability to the PUC with the primary goal of protecting public safety and increasing oversight.

The Public Records Act currently allows the PUC to establish a policy for public access to its records. Contrary to the intent of the Public Records Act, the PUC presumes all documents are confidential unless it expressly acts to share documents with the public.

Following the natural gas explosions in Rancho Cordova and San Bruno, consumer advocacy organizations and the Legislature had to press the PUC to release information pertaining to accident investigations and public safety. Many of these documents subsequently raised doubts about practices at gas utility companies that potentially put the public at risk, and lapses in oversight of utility companies by the PUC.

The bill would require the PUC to comply with the intent of the Public Records Act, so that the public would be guaranteed access to documents unless the information meets specified criteria, such as endangering the public by its release.

SB 1000 (Yee) would also subject the PUC to the Public Records Act.

Analyst/Principal (0621) J.McGuinn	Date	Program Budget Manager Karen Finn	Date
Department Deputy Director		Date	
Governor's Office:	By:	Date:	Position Approved _____ Position Disapproved _____
BILL ANALYSIS			Form DF-43 (Rev 03/95 Buff)

BILL ANALYSIS--(CONTINUED)**Form DF-43****AUTHOR****AMENDMENT DATE****BILL NUMBER**

Dickinson, Roger

04/16/2012

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	SO	(Fiscal Impact by Fiscal Year)					
Code/Department	LA	(Dollars in Thousands)					
Agency or Revenue	CO	PROP					Fund
Type	RV	98	FC	2011-2012 FC	2012-2013 FC	2013-2014	Code
8660/PUC	SO	No		-----	No/Minor Fiscal Impact	-----	0462
<u>Fund Code</u>	<u>Title</u>						
0462	Publ Utilities Comm Utilities Reimb Acct						